

COINCIDENCES

by Miriam Cahn

I would not be

I would not be had I not not I I too but not even at all if.
I would not be only not I I too I would not be. I am because.
I am I too I because if.

I would not be if my mother had not met my father I
naturally by the nature of things would not be I would not
be.

my mother from Paris take flight flee must my mother
refugee. my mother daughter sister and her younger sister
brother from Paris to the south must flee. my mother put
by her parents my grandparents in panic on a child refugee
transport on a child train in panic from Paris to south of
france in panic at the german enemies their own children
alone on a child refugee transport to the south to an uncle
in panic. my mother eldest daughter alone for her sister
brother must care my mother with her sister brother swiss
refugees in child refugee transport. my mother born grew
up in Paris panic at the enemies germans my mother
foreigner swiss girl. in panic my grandparents put their
children in panic their own foreign children only children on
the child train to south of france in panic.

I would not be if my grandparents had not in panic sent
their children in panic to the south panic. I would not be if
my mother not been my mother. if she daughter sister niece
had not been sent to south of france panic sent freighted
transported to an uncle to a farmer to southern france I
would not be.

my mother takes high school diploma teaches child

refugees earns a little money draws paints makes
music swims in the sea happy the young woman in war in
southern france at her uncle's. but but I would not be if my
mother had not should had to go back to Switzerland for
family reunion as Swiss girl back must as daughter sister
must ought as foreign swiss girl from France back to
Switzerland so-called home suddenly. live in Basel as
refugees or suchlike or how or so as swiss refugees in
Switzerland in Basel in mid-war not much money my
mother daughter sister has to work so that her only son can
should must study in Switzerland. my mother becomes a
secretary in my father's business.

I would not be.

I would not be if my grandmother my father's mother had
not said in 1933:

—either Hitler or me!—

and has to take flight flee with her sons from Germany to
Switzerland not to the USA my father son much prefer flee
to the USA want much much more to the USA but no surety
so Switzerland so flee must should to Switzerland and
transfer the firm in tiny little bits etc or so or howsoever to
Switzerland. to have should let be assigned in Switzerland
as stateless german with J passport to that city that still
has no antiques dealer. Basel then here in Basel friends of
my father's friends found a firm so that my grandmother +
her sons here in Basel fled here can stay here with their firm
here during the war here in Basel precarious due to refugee
status precarious but all the same. very precarious
above all in 1941 but to be able to be here able to live here
in Basel able to do even a little business modest but all the
same.

I would not be if my father boss of the firm not had my

mother employed I would not be. I would not be if my father, boss, married, had not fallen in love with my mother, secretary. he courted her for a very long time a very very long long time. there was someone else, he was married. she my mother was not a jewess, he my father a jew had a Jewish wife. she my mother young woman wanted to become an artist a musician, he wanted to start a family children without fail I would not be.

I would not be.

after the war my grandparents back to Paris my mother daughter artist in Paris want to be after the war maybe artist maybe musician in Paris want to be but but but my mother my father now love now want to have now want to marry.

I would not be if my father not divorce and not want should marry his beloved my father my mother both now want start family have children in the nature of things naturally I am I too I and also not I because if.

miriam cahn *Palü* 2015

Translated from German by Christopher Jenkin-Jones

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